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**“An investigation into the mass media consumption  
of rural New Zealand adolescents.”**

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## Abstract

Adolescent New Zealanders are experienced, knowledgeable and fascinated consumers of the Mass Media. This case study based thesis investigated the mass media consumption of a sample group of Year 12 and year 13 rural secondary school students, living in the North Island of New Zealand during the winter of 1998. The thesis examined the sample groups consumption patterns, across a range of mass media formats and products, with reference to discerning any social class, gender and ethnic differences amongst their consumption patterns and preferences. The theoretical basis for the thesis stemmed from the writings of Pierre Bourdieu's notion of 'Cultural Capital'. The thesis broadly asked, how much mass media does the sample group consume, and what are the reasons behind this level of consumption? Comparisons of the sample group in this case study were made with previous New Zealand and Overseas adolescent media consumption studies. The thesis also drew from a range of further media research completed by Rosengren et al (1994), Steele and Brown (1995) and Holt (1998). The sample group were found to be enthusiastic consumers of mass media products, particularly those from the United States. American television programmes, recording artists, films, and videos were overwhelmingly popular, greatly overshadowing local New Zealand forms of the mass media. Considerable differences were found in the consumption of popular music styles, film and video genres, and computer based media technologies amongst gender, ethnic and socio-economic groups. Overall the sample group of rural adolescents allowed the mass media to assume a significant role in their individual lives as a way of coping with the physical and social isolation; gaining an

understanding of and developing meaning from the wider world; and creating their own personal identities and values. High levels of mass media products derived from the United States are consumed by the sample group. This has raised the question; should producers and distributors of youth orientated mass media in New Zealand attempt to right this content imbalance, or should the emphasis be put into developing for our youth the critical skills to make informed media consumption choices using the platform of our education system? It is hoped that this thesis will provide media educationalists and analysts, an insight into how and why the mass media has achieved a place of huge significance in the lives of our New Zealand youth.

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